

1668/3333.

A D V I C E  
TO THE  
PROTESTANT CLERGY  
OF  
I R E L A N D;

IN WHICH

The PRESENT DISPOSITIONS of the PUBLIC towards  
THEM are considered,

The PRETENDED and REAL CAUSES of these Disposi-  
tions enquired into,

AND

Some MEASURES suggested that seem most necessary and  
expedient at the PRESENT JUNCTURE to  
REDRESS the INJURIES and SECURE the  
RIGHTS of the CLERGY.

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*By a LAYMAN of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.*

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" HERE IT IS NECESSARY TO DECLARE, THOUGH IT MAK-  
" ETH AN ODD SOUND, THAT WHORVER PROFFESSES HIM-  
" SELF A MEMBER OF THAT CHURCH, OUGHT TO BE-  
" LIEVE IN A GOD AND HIS PROVIDENCE, TOGETHER  
" WITH REVEALED RELIGION, AND THE DIVINITY OF  
" JESUS CHRIST."

*Swift's Sentiments of a Church of England-Man.*

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

AND A D C I

PROTESTANT

W. M. P.

M. P. L. I. C.

OF THE



W. M. P.

W. M. P.

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**A D V I C E**  
**TO THE**  
**PROTESTANT CLERGY,**

**OF**  
**I R E L A N D.**

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**GENTLEMEN,**

**L**EST, when you are told this Advice is penned by a Layman, you should turn away from it as offered by a lukewarm friend, or an insidious enemy, I have declared myself a Layman of the Church of England, and further declared with Swift, "That whoever professeth himself a member of that church ought to believe in God and his providence, together with revealed religion and the divinity of Jesus Christ."

This declaration will, I know, make the men of wit and pleasure about town; the men of busi-

ness and politeness about court; and the men of deep reading and free thinking among the country gentlemen, throw me by as an old fellow, full of obsolete notions, and absurd prejudices: but as this advice was not meant for their perusal, I think it would be unfair, by concealing my sentiments, to induce them to waste their precious time in a study which has no connection with their several important and praise-worthy pursuits.

Having thus, Gentlemen, assured you I am your friend, and told you why I am so, and having by so doing forfeited all chance of attention from every other order of men, (a sacrifice which, from an author, may be taken as a sufficient proof of sincerity) I hope you will think me worthy of yours.

I think there is a necessity of addressing you to rouse your attention to the most important of your temporal interests. My reasons for this opinion are derived from plain facts, too strong I fear to be refuted, and are briefly, because there have been attempts made through above two-thirds of the kingdom, to destroy the only subsistence of your order, which, though in the highest degree tumultuous, illegal, and cruel, have raised little public alarm, have been seldom opposed, and still more rarely defeated, and will certainly afford a pretext to attempt unsettling the whole ecclesiastical establishment in this kingdom; a shock which may possibly destroy the only foundation on which that establishment rests; or at least overturn all the supports that give it dignity or strength. While I have not heard that you, Gentlemen, have united, or even thought of uniting, to employ any influence you may still retain, to adopt any plan, or concert any measures that may lessen or retard so great a calamity; or that you have, as private gentlemen or public magistrates, exerted yourselves indi-





individually (where it was not absolutely necessary for your personal safety) to check or even discountenance proceedings tending to your immediate destruction; the first step to rouse you to exertion is to convince you, that you are in danger: for which a brief and unexaggerated statement of the late transactions will, I suppose, suffice.

It is not necessary, for this purpose, to dwell upon particulars, to state how many gallowses have been erected and graves dug for the punishment of those worst of traitors, proctors and tithe-farmers: how many have suffered by fire and by water, on foot and on horseback: how many have been cropped, and flead, and shot, for foolishly imagining their ground still contained an acre, though the omnipotence of the white-boys had \* changed it, while men slept, into a rood, or for contradicting those masters of arithmetic, who had fully proved that the value of a barrel at home was not greater than that of a peck at the next market; and that a shilling given to a parson was as much as a guinea to another man: how they have said in some places, † “ We offer you parsons  
“ such and such rates for our tithes, and if you  
“ consent to these rates, we will give you no-  
“ thing.” And in others ‡, “ Hear all ye peo-  
“ ple, you must give no more than such and such

\* This happened in one of the most southern counties, where the white-boys would suffer the acres of potatoes to be measured only by the ridges, as all farmers know the trenches are useless.

† This happened to many clergymen in the south; in some places the right-boys assigned a very satisfactory reason for this proceeding, *viz.* that their head arithmetician, captain and legislator, was drunk when he drew up the rates, and that the parsons ought not to be allowed such an unfair advantage.

‡ This happened in several parts of the south.

“ rates



" rates for your tithes, and if you give these, we  
 " will bury you." These things are so familiar,  
 that, like the deaths and marriages in a magazine,  
 they are read by none but the writer and printer  
 of the paragraph; or like the accounts of the  
 plague at Constantinople, or earthquakes in Italy,  
 said to be very sad things, but of no concern to  
 us.

Not to be tedious, these few facts are univer-  
 versally acknowledged. That the most poor and  
 desperate parts of the rabble, whom it is absolutely  
 necessary for the existence of every government  
 to prevent from MEETING, TAKING UP ARMS,  
 FEELING THEIR OWN STRENGTH, AND INTER-  
 FERING IN THE LEGISLATURE; and who are in  
 this country PROHIBITED from assembling and  
 carrying arms, by express acts of parliament, under  
 the severest penalties, have in different parts of the  
 country, the most thickly inhabited, and immedi-  
 ately near the two second greatest cities in the  
 kingdom, assembled by night and by day, not on-  
 ly carrying arms of their own making, but strip-  
 ping the protestant inhabitants of theirs by force;  
 and this for the purpose of swearing themselves,  
 and obliging others to swear, that they would obey  
 the orders of their respective leaders, and observe  
 such regulations as they should prescribe; and to  
 punish by all means short of murder (except in  
 some instances where their temper failed) all who  
 refused to comply with or dared to violate such  
 regulations.

That though it is generally acknowledged the se-  
 curity of property is the chief purpose of political  
 union, and therefore the laws distributing it are  
 considered as of the highest importance in every  
 state, and it is confessed that the right of the eccle-  
 siastics to their share in the property of the king-  
 dom

dom is as old and as clear as that of any land-holder to his estate; yet the express purpose of these meetings, and the regulations established at them, has been to deprive the whole body of ecclesiastics of the present disposal and enjoyment of this property, or the greater part of it, and diminish it in future as seemeth good to these legislators.

It has been generally allowed by all writers on government, and indeed by all men of common sense, that the bad execution of established laws is more contrary to the public good than any defect of laws can be, and that there is no surer symptom of a weak government, and a corrupted state, than when a spirit of disobedience to laws and open defiance of them, amongst the lower ranks of subjects, and of indifference for their observance among the higher, generally and notoriously prevails. And when all the usual exertions of the executive power are ineffectual, either to detect the perpetrators of the most atrocious offences, or when detected to inflict any punishments on them, powerful enough to deter others from the repetition of the same offences, or procure any attention to, or reverence for the established laws of the land.

Now that this is an exact portrait of the present state of this kingdom is a truth which, however melancholy, cannot be denied. The government has issued proclamations and offered rewards, sent circular letters to rouse the sleeping magistrates to their duty, almost doubled the phalanx of circuit judges and king's counsellors, and even employed a considerable military force to curb and punish the insurgents; but alas! all to no purpose! the people have been deaf to their proclamations and blind to their rewards. The magistrates have slept on, unwakened by the circular letters, the judges have had no opportunity of exerting their authority, and the king's



king's counsellors have been as if struck dumb; only two offenders were capitally convicted in the whole circuit, and those few who were condemned to slighter punishments almost every where escaped, because the usual executioners were not hardy enough to perform their office. And what was the cause of this? Not that there were no offences committed or no laws provided against them, but because the perpetrators were so linked together by their common zeal and common interest, that nothing could induce them to desert so good a cause, or so much more in awe of the body of offenders, than confident of the protection of the law, that they dare not detect each other; or because the offenders were conducted by men of such deliberate coolness or dangerous cunning, that they violated the spirit without exposing themselves to the letter of the law; or, (what was the most general cause of all) because the country gentlemen were more inclined to shelter than prosecute the delinquents, to conceal rather than produce evidence, to smother rather than attend to accusation; and because the country magistrates wanted either the will or the power to imprison offenders, and in some instances, however extraordinary it may seem, had not courage enough, though supported by the military, to retain them when re-demanded by their associates in guilt. Of the military, the very best that can be said is, that though they certainly did no good, yet possibly they have done no harm to the interests of the clergy. The insurrections indeed were less violently and tumultuously carried on in those parts of the country where they were stationed, while they remained there; but to make up for the loss of time, they are now renewed with double clamour and violence, and the right boys are proceeding to levy contributions where they before levied arms, acting with the expertness of veterans,



veterans, in first taking away the means of resistance from those whom they designed afterwards to plunder.

Such, Gentlemen, have been the measures, and such the success of your more open enemies; yet, much I fear, there are symptoms too convincing that the evil has taken root deeper, and is likely to raise its head higher, that you have many formidable enemies of greater authority and more extensive influence—Indeed the facts already stated are sufficient to prove that your enemies are not among the rabble alone; such might have murmured and threatened, burst into a few sudden acts of violence, and raised a momentary terror; but had they been unsupported by men of property, or seriously and seasonably opposed by the magistrates, they never could have published their laws in open day, sanctioned them by denouncing the severest punishments, and enforced their observance by constantly inflicting the punishments they held out; they would not have dared to proceed in a regular system, disturbing the public peace, violating the most express laws, insulting the government, and subverting the constitution of the land; and all this not only with impunity, but almost without reprehension, gaining no harsher appellation than that of deluded wretches, and represented in no more formidable light than as an insignificant banditti—And this in a country where, for some years past, there has been such a general and noble emulation to secure to every man the benefits of our free constitution. Where in other cases the military were never called on to assist the executive power, because the people were the voluntary guardians of the laws—Where the legislature has rejected the proposals, known to be supported by some of the most powerful and respectable men in the nation,

tion, because offered in what *seemed* a disrespectful and unconstitutional manner. In a word, a nation where every man's eye seemed to watch the public good, and every man's arm seemed raised to defend public liberty and private rights—It is impossible the scene should be so soon and so dreadfully changed, that in this very nation men should be so inattentive to the common course of events, so deaf to the voice of reason and experience, as to forget all of a sudden, that law, and order, and peace are valuable blessings, that in an established state, each order of men is interested in preserving the rights of every other, and that where property is fearlessly attacked, laws violated with impunity, and the supreme executive authority despised and defeated, no man's possessions, liberty, or life are for a moment secure. I say, it is impossible men should neglect these obvious conclusions if some deep rooted prejudice did not blind and mislead them; and that can be no other than a general indifference for, or I much fear, a general disaffection to the clerical order.

But it is not merely on negative or presumptive evidence that I found my assertion, that the clergy are not only calumniated and attacked by the lower classes, but that their rights are viewed with jealousy, and their cause heard with unfavourable prejudices by the higher. Unhappily there are numbers in every company ready to profess their compassion at the unheard-of oppressions that have been exercised on the quiet, meek, unresisting populace, by the turbulent, rapacious, and tyrannic clergy; to receive with implicit belief, and propagate with unwearied diligence stories of the distortions of law, and perversion of justice practised by their deputies and emissaries, so numerous and universal, that it is unreasonable to desire them to relate or prove any particular



cular instance, or point out any particular place, while the enterprises of the right boys are represented as praise-worthy exertions, not expressly commanded by law, but certainly agreeable to the spirit of the constitution, sometimes perhaps ill-directed, but always well meant. That their legislators rules are drawn, not indeed with the accuracy and refinement of regular statutes, but with what is more valuable, the uncorrupted spirit of natural equity, expressing their meaning briefly indeed, but with a laconic and commanding brevity, and enforcing their observance, not with such tedious forms as we daily complain of in our courts of judicature, but with the happy expedition of summary justice; in a word, that if their rules are not laws, they are something better than law, something ABOVE law.

As a further proof of the general temper of the public, at least of those persons who are most listened to, because they talk most, and therefore must determine the voice of public fame, and who convey the news of the country to the polite circles in town—it may be observed, that as you approach the capital the crimes committed by the white boys diminish gradually in numbers and magnitude, lose the rough and savage features they bore in the country, and are gradually refined away, till in the metropolis itself they become mere unsubstantial nothings, whose existence is scarcely discerned or believed, or if believed, thought too insignificant to merit attention. While, on the contrary, the oppressions of proctors, &c. swell to a gigantic magnitude, and assume a terrific form, distort every face with horror, and employ every tongue in execration. The reason of this is obvious:—The country folks who see graves dug, gallowses raised, and men flead and cropped, &c. &c. &c. by those



deluded wretches, and whose rest is disturbed by their yellings and trumpets, have not philosophy enough to disbelieve their senses, but still, unwilling to load the oppressed with the imputation of such indiscretions, or give the tyrannic parsons an opportunity of calumniating these well meaning men, they report these things as matters which they had indeed heard to have happened, but probably were not half so bad as they are represented. The polite townsmen, knowing how apt prejudice and partiality are to mislead rustic and uncultivated minds, how necessary it is to deduct from what they hear on account of the exaggerations it must have received by the way, and how liable men's senses are to be deceived about things generally related to have been done in the night, which therefore may have been infinitely increased, or even entirely created by timid and superstitious minds (especially where priestcraft is so much to be apprehended) I say, making due allowance for all these circumstances, they wisely conclude that those malicious reports should have little or no credit given them. While, on the contrary, every charge against the priesthood must necessarily be true; because in an age whose distinguishing characteristic is a blind veneration for the supposed sanctity of the priestly character, it were impossible that any charge should be made against persons so excessively revered, if there were not greater grievances existing than those charges stated, as in former days of a similar character, the profligacy and debauchery which was detected on bursting open the cloisters of the monks, &c. were greater than any they had been charged with, especially as the priesthood of the present day, are exactly of the same suspicious character as those of that period, of an hypocritical sanctity and austerity of manners, immuring themselves in cloisters,

cloisters, and avoiding all those innocent employments and connections which are useful to society, such as supporting and educating families, &c.

If these proofs are not sufficient to convince you how favourably your enemies, and how unfavourably your cause is viewed by the public, other proofs still more strong remain ; for it appears that even the chief magistrates of different places have condescended to meet those peaceable and respectable subjects, the deluded white-boys, to acknowledge the existence of their grievances, to beg of them to moderate for a while their just resentments, and in the abundance of their zeal pledged themselves, that the legislature would interpose and redress their grievances ; and that their promises may take effect, have held county meetings, where the petitions of those creditable and faithful citizens have been received as a sufficient evidence that such grievances did really exist, (though some ecclesiastics of dignity called for proofs of any specific charge, or particular instance of oppression, to no purpose) and in consequence have addressed their representatives to bring these matters before parliament, and procure as speedy redress as the forms of the constitution will admit. Thus you will be presented to the legislature at the next meeting, as so many public nuisances, loaded with the charges of injustice, rapacity and oppression—Where every young, and humble, and pathetic speaker may have an opportunity of securing popularity by the easiest of all possible means, even declaiming on the supposed hardships of the poor, and the necessity of relieving them ; with a new and witty strain of irony, paying due reverence to the sacred ecclesiastical profession, but lamenting that the ecclesiastics are still but men, whence it must be necessary for the legislature to interpose, and prevent their abusing those temporal



temporal trusts which spiritual men can so ill manage ; displaying his freedom from bigotry and prejudice, by decrying those frivolous distinctions in creeds and ceremonies, which prevent *Christians of every denomination*, whether Papists, or Protestants, or Presbyterians, or *Deists*, or *Atheists*, from uniting in one faith and forming one body. Others, of deeper information, and more indignant spirits, recounting, in strains of vehement and descriptive eloquence, the evils that superstition and priestcraft have in every age given rise to ; proving the ambition and avarice of churchmen, and warning the legislature, in this superstitious and priest-ridden age and country, to guard against the return of such dreadful evils from the present aspiring and crafty race of ecclesiastics ; and finally, displaying his own compassionate and generous temper, by proposing to bestow the property of the church to relieve the distresses of the poor.

To sum up all the circumstances, which prove how generally a spirit of disaffection to, or at least indifference for your order is diffused, it appears that when the clergy are attacked, the great body of the public has seen, without alarm, the most dangerous part of the community assuming arms themselves, and disarming the protestants, with hardly any resistance on the part of the latter—laws violated—order trampled on—property attacked—cruelties in many instances—murders in some committed—the supreme executive authority defied and overcome ; and this not only without indignation at the perpetrators of such offences, but with commiseration for them as unhappy wretches, driven to desperate measures by your extortion and rapacity : the charges of which are every where echoed against you, believed without proof, and exaggerated beyond measure, while every charge



charge against your enemies is smothered, extenuated and denied, or thought of too little importance to be attended to. That you will probably be represented to the legislature in a most disadvantageous light; and finally, that your avowed enemies are numerous, violent and successful, your friends few, lukewarm and inactive; though the measures adopted for your destruction are such as, if experience and sound policy had been at all attended to, must have united in your defence every man who has any wish to secure the property, liberty and life of the subjects, or defend the laws and constitution of the land, independent of any regard for religion, or any reverence for the established church.

The next step to shew you the extent of your danger, and lead to the means of guarding against it, seems to be, to enquire into the pretended and real causes, which in a country where you are the ministers of the established religion, could have produced so general and extraordinary a disaffection.

The chief cause alledged by your enemies, as a sufficient justification for their violence in attacking you, and by your lukewarm friends, for declining your defence, is, that you and your deputies have abused the right vested in you by law, of collecting tithes, to the great hardship and oppression of the poor, to so great a degree, that this single circumstance is said to be the chief cause of that poverty and distress by which the peasantry of this country are certainly oppressed; or, to use the elegant language of the manifesto signed William O'Driscoll, secretary to the Munster peasantry, "you are the  
"decimating leeches that fatten on the vitals of the  
"poor;" or the equally forcible expressions of the *address* to his Majesty, from the same Munster peasantry,

fantry ; " it is the relentless rigidity of proctors,  
 " the agents of un pitying ecclesiastics, who fre-  
 " quently farm the tithes through as many degrees  
 " as the lands themselves pass through hands, that  
 " is the accumulation of their sufferings ; these are  
 " demands exorbitant in themselves, and extorted  
 " with minute rapacity." And in a pamphlet,  
 signed a beneficed clergyman, where he attributes  
 the miseries of the people to the fatal operati-  
 on of tithes—" *hinc illæ lachrymæ*—from hence  
 " issue the swarms of beggars with which every  
 " road is overspread ; from hence issue rioters,  
 " robbers and white-boys, with which every  
 " county is infested." And here I cannot but ac-  
 knowledge and lament that the peasantry of Ireland  
 in general, and particularly the southern parts of it,  
 are oppressed with poverty to a degree scarcely  
 equalled in any civilized country, and scarcely to be  
 credited in such a one as this, where we should  
 suppose the protection our admirable constitution  
 has, *till very lately*, afforded for the liberty and  
 property of each individual in every class of citi-  
 zens, would give every man the power of employ-  
 ing himself as his situation and abilities should point  
 out were most to his advantage, and stimulate him  
 to activity, by securing to him the fruits of his ex-  
 ertions. The chief causes of this lamentable ef-  
 fect seem to be few and obvious, and it appears to  
 me are adequate to that effect, without attributing  
 such dreadful consequences to the operation of the  
 tithe laws. They are, as well as I can judge,  
 briefly these :—The infancy or almost total want  
 of trade and manufactures in the south of Ireland ;  
 the high rents of lands, which produces a proporti-  
 onable high price of provisions, yet *is not* accompa-  
 nied by a proportionably high price for labour.  
 It would swell this treatise to an excessive length if  
 I were

I were minutely to enquire into the causes of such a combination of distresses; but it may help to satisfy the minds of those who have been accustomed to consider tithes as the original and chief cause of all the grievances by which the poor are oppressed, very briefly to sketch out the situation of the lower tenantry in the south of Ireland.

The want of trade and manufactures precludes the peasant from any means of support but such as his labour in agriculture affords. Now for such labour there is little demand, because beef, butter, and raw wool, are the chief exports of the south of Ireland, which are all raised by grazing, not tillage, and require little assistance from the labour of the peasantry in any stage of their progress, yet afford a high rent to the landlord, as well as considerable profit to the head tenant. But though the peasantry share not in the profit of the ground, by receiving high wages for their labour, they bear even more than their due proportion of the burthen of rent, since the landlords choose to let their ground in large lots rather than parcel it out in small ones, as their income is thus more easily collected, as well as more secure. The head farmers who rent these large lots are unwilling to encumber their ground with men, except such few as are necessary to herd their cattle, and as unwilling to encourage tillage to any extent, because the unskilful mode of tilling usually practised by the Irish peasantry, injures ground for its chief purpose, grazing; they therefore let to such peasants as they cannot do without, as much ground for tillage as barely supplies them with subsistence, assigning such rent for the ground, and such price for labour, that the whole year's labour of the peasant barely pays for the cottage and potatoe garden he occupies; so that no industry, however active, can provide a fund that will sustain the loss of an unfavourable season, a sudden fit of illness, or fur-



nish a supply when old age and infirmities put a stop to exertion. These observations are confirmed by facts, since it is well known that in the rich grazing counties in the south of Ireland, the peasants are more depressed by poverty, confined to the poorer tracts, and obliged to pay the highest rents for them; while in the poorer, whose soil is such as to make it fit for tillage only, they live comfortably, though the rent of the ground is not less in proportion to its value, and the quantity of tithe is much greater.

It cannot be denied but tithe has some tendency to encrease these evils, by encouraging grazing and discouraging tillage; but that it contributes very inconsiderably to this effect, will be evident to every man who considers what is certainly fact, that in those grounds which are *tithe free* tillage is *very little*, if *at all*, more extensively carried on than in those which are not: for this obvious reason, that the landlord requires a higher rent for them; and as freedom from tithe does not alter the nature of the ground, it will, if rich and best adapted to grazing, be applied to that purpose, and not to tillage.

To conclude, we need not, I think, attribute the poverty of the poor entirely to the operation of tithes, when we know lands are dear, labour cheap, and the necessities of life from day to day the highest reward the industry of the peasantry can hope for.

‘ In addition to these causes, it were easy to paint,  
 ‘ in the pathetic phraseology of unadorned simplicity,  
 ‘ and the humble strains of rustic eloquence,  
 ‘ how the people are denuded of their hard earned  
 ‘ pittance, by the \* “relentless rigidity of agents,  
 ‘ “bailiffs,

\* Vid. Address of the white-boys to the King, of which this paragraph is an humble imitation.—The address may be had from Byrne.

"bailiffs, and drivers, the emissaries of un pitying  
 "landlords"—and even the scanty gleanings that  
 "might still fall to their share are swept away by  
 "the exuberant ramifications of subordinate mono-  
 "polists. To declaim with the zeal of honest in-  
 "dignation, at that insidious emulation, which at  
 "the conclusion of every lease collects crouds of  
 "aliens, each eager to supplant the veteran occu-  
 "pier, while advertisements proclaim that all of-  
 "fers shall be kept secret till the day of decision,  
 "and that no preference will be given but to the  
 "highest bidder, for what is this, but to stimulate  
 "contention to the utmost extremity by the con-  
 "tinued hopes of success, and yield to the all-grasp-  
 "ing hand of unsatiated avarice, what is denied to  
 "the prior right of long possession, and the equi-  
 "table claims of the active improver. Hence the  
 "transition were easy to the dire effects of absen-  
 "tees, led by ambition, luxury, or ostentation to  
 "foreign climes, where they absorb the wealth of  
 "the nation never more to return, while their de-  
 "solate tenants are no longer cheered by the en-  
 "livening beams of their diffused bounty, or shel-  
 "tered by the guardian shade of their domestic vir-  
 "tues, but pine away, blasted by the rapacity of  
 "unfeeling deputies, and sink into indolence by the  
 "suspension of those improvements, which ought  
 "at once to supply honest pleasure to elegance of  
 "taste, and certain support to the activity of indus-  
 "try; nor were it difficult to lament that passion for  
 "tumified magnificence which exhausts the reve-  
 "nues, and renders callous the feelings of the great  
 "ones, who remain the unaiding spectators of the  
 "peasantries de-ression, *sui profusus*, is indeed al-  
 "ways united with the *alieni-appetens*, and those who  
 "after consuming the abundance of their own  
 "wealth, remain unsatisfied, can ill attend to the



'cravings of their dependents.' But these, and other equally fertile topics I decline, because it seems to be generally agreed that such complaints have *no meaning*, except when urged *against the clergy*, and I wish to observe *propriety of language*, and render myself intelligible to readers of the present day, as well as because some of those grievances have caught the attention of the MUNSTER PARLIAMENT, and therefore will probably be redressed with the dispatch and energy which characterise the proceedings of those active and successful legislators. It is consequently unnecessary to paint them in stronger colours.

I now proceed to consider the various pretexts of clamour against tithes, and here let me not be understood to maintain, that in no instances oppression is exercised, or just ground of complaint afforded by the proprietors of tithes; this would be rash indeed, when it is considered that this sort of property is diffused through so many hands, as well laymen as clergy, some few of whom may possibly be urged by necessity to exaction, and besides is to be levied chiefly on the poorest part of the community, on whom a strict enforcement of even legal right is often extreme oppression. But I assert, and undertake to prove, that the circumstances and limitations of this property are such, that it is at least as little liable to be disposed of at exorbitant rates, and collected oppressively, as any other possible description of property; and that the clergy are, and ever have been, as little able or willing to abuse the rights granted them by law as any other set of men; and consequently that the laws relating to tithes should not be more complained of, or more readily repealed, than any of the codes of law which regulate the levying of taxes, the recovery of debts, or the collection of rents in this country.

Here

Here I cannot avoid premising, that though tithes are generally exclaimed against as a *grievance*, the meaning of that word is not so generally or precisely understood as it is supposed to be. Lawyers would perhaps define it an "encroachment on the natural rights of any man, not justified by his due consent or the express letter of the law." In a more enlarged sense it seems to mean, "any such encroachment, whether justified by the letter of the law or not, which is contrary to the spirit of our laws and constitution," but in common usage men are often said to be *aggrieved* when they *suffer* any thing that it is *grievous* to suffer; thus a debtor when he is forced to pay his debts, by being thrown into gaol is *aggrieved*, and a forger or highway man, when a judge is unreasonable enough to condemn him for having perhaps only once *mistaken* another man's name or property for his own, though he may have lived ever so long, using his own property, or writing in his own name. In which of these senses *but the last* tithes are a grievance, it seems hard to shew. Not in the *first*, I imagine, because no man denies tithes are *appointed by law*, or prescription equivalent to law, and they are certainly purchased in the usual way of other bargains, *with the free consent* of the purchaser; and as to the second sense, it has not been yet clearly shewn, (at least within my knowledge) that the payment of tithes is *absolutely contrary* to any natural right of man, or any established principle of the British constitution. But I suppose your adversaries, gentlemen, will call this a mere verbal distinction, and therefore I lay no weight on it.

The circumstance in the collection of tithes which is most generally considered as highly unjust, oppressive, and indefensible, is the practice of appointing



pointing tithes farmers and proctors, and it seems to be supposed, that any profit such persons retain as a compensation for their trouble, is so much *wrested unjustly* from the poor, as if a clergyman could, in his lease, grant a power of levying a *fifth*, instead of *the tenth*, or conjure away the senses of the parishioners, and thus delude them to give more to the deputy than they would have done to himself; now if this is not the case, in what does the grievance consist? why, merely in this, that the deputy is usually more expert in making bargains and enforcing payment, and thus secures what more nearly approaches to the real value, than the parson can do; and the complaint of oppression proceeds, not from the oppressed paying more than the real value of their tithes, but that their neighbours pay less, as dealing with clergymen themselves, who usually make less profit of the same property than any deputies they can appoint; a clear proof of their insatiable avarice and *relentless rigidity*.

But perhaps I have wholly mistaken this matter, and that the people complain, not of the quantity they are obliged to pay, but because it is not their *spiritual pastor* who receives the benefit of it; they cannot bear to think that he should give up any part of his income to avoid the trouble of dealing with themselves, which so far from suffering to be a trouble, they would make a source of constant pleasure, by taking every opportunity of displaying their own disinterestedness and honesty, and pointing out his mistake wherever he might estimate the quantity of produce below the truth, or demand too small a price for it; errors which clergymen are very subject to, from the defective education they receive at the university, where I do not find there are any professors appointed, or lectures,

lectures read, to instruct the students designed for the church in the value of barley, potatoes, rurf, &c. or explain and inculcate with due precaution, that maxim of as ancient and certainly as wise a sage as any of the Grecian or Roman schools, that "*a penny saved in a bargain is a penny got.*"—A neglect arising probably from the constant experience of the readiness with which the people remedy it, and therefore easily excusable.

I next proceed to the exorbitance of the *demands* for tithes, so pathetically lamented by the white-boy orator cited before. A demand is then exorbitant when it claims for any thing more than the common market price for which it may be purchased in the neighbourhood of equal goodness; and there seem to be but three possible means which could produce acquiescence in such a demand—Ignorance of the value of what is performed—necessity, which cannot brook delay, but obliges the purchaser to take it at any price—or fear of him who offers it to sale. Ignorance cannot surely be pleaded by the peasantry, who must know exactly the expences of cultivation, the quantity of the produce, and the market price it bears. As to fear, I do not see how a clergyman or his deputy can terrify the peasantry into exorbitant prices for their tithes; he cannot, like a landlord, and tenant at will, turn out him and his family at a moment's warning to beggary and starving; or without any previous process in a civil court, drive for any tithe already due, if he hesitates complying with his present demand. Necessity is oftenest pleaded; and it is said that the peasant having cultivated barely enough for his subsistence, cannot spare any to the tithe-proprietor, who therefore takes advantage of this necessity, and extorts an exorbitant price. To this it may be answered, that if he is involved in this necessity,



necessity, it must have been caused by his own imprudence, since, as he must have known that he was by law obliged to pay tithe, and be sufficiently acquainted with the severe temper of the tithe-proprietor, he should have provided sufficient to pay his demand in kind, which, from the small additional quantity of tillage requisite, he might in general easily do. And further, if he has money to pay for his tithe at the time of sale he may (should an exorbitant price be required) pay it in kind, and supply himself at the next market. If he has no money, let us suppose for argument sake (though no case has ever been adduced to my knowledge of such a bargain) that he passes his note for more than the tithe is worth at the time of sale; that is, he gives his promise for an extraordinary sum of money, to recompence the indulgence in time, not being able to procure money at the present, or find any other person in the whole country who will run the hazard of accepting his security, and supply his wants at a less premium. If this is a grievance, I suppose numberless laws about interest and transactions of credit, which have been hitherto thought highly beneficial to all the parties concerned, must be ranked among grievances.

There remains a still stronger proof that there is no sort of property materially requisite for the support of the peasant, in which he is less exposed to such a necessity as might oblige him to purchase it at an exorbitant rate, than tithes. The cottage which shelters him, and the potatoe-garden which supplies him with subsistence, he cannot for a moment do without; he must take them at the rent set on them, or submit to be turned out destitute of any supply, to beg or starve. Not so with tithes; his having this necessarily supposes that he must

must have the other nine parts for his immediate sustenance, and may therefore wait for the chance of a more favourable market or indulgent creditor. But how wholly improbable is it, that any tithe-proprietor should treat a parish with such severity since probably the consequence will be, that they will unite to pay him in kind, which is so inconvenient to him that a general notice from a parish to that purpose is almost as terrible as a combination totally to subtract the tithe would be, especially since if he has demanded an exorbitant price, he may be sure he will undergo great loss, as well as great trouble, since he cannot expect such price at market. It is therefore his interest to give it at the market value; and if he refuses to do so, the parishioners have always the remedy of paying it in kind, which will punish his extortion:—And on the contrary, if sold at that value, it is from its vicinity cheaper to the farmer than any he could purchase. Now it is very difficult to point out any sort of property in which the seller has so few temptations to attempt extortion, and the buyer such effectual means to resist it.

But the best answer to this, and indeed every similar objection, is a candid appeal to general experience. It is well known that tithes are valued in that season of the year when provisions are cheapest, and at the price they then bear;—that in many parishes the *modus* fixes their price at much below the market price, and certainly it never can establish one above it;—that there scarcely ever is an instance where a single tithe is paid in kind that it does not more than *double* the valuation, though it may be impracticable, and therefore unprofitable, to draw the tithe of a whole parish.

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I next proceed to consider the minute rapacity with which tithes (more than any other species of property) are collected: this is charged more directly on the proctors, but it also reflects on the clergy; for if the emissaries are "*relentlessly rigid*" the ecclesiastics *before* are "*piteously un pitying*." The chief facts I have been able to learn as to the collecting of them are these:—That it is never customary to demand payment for the tithes of one year till those of the next are ready to be let, and that not unfrequently two years income are constantly due by the parish;—that if a parish is to be leased to a tithe farmer, one-third of the average value at which it lets is generally allowed for the trouble of collecting, and the proportion of bad debts;—that there are no debts divided into such small and unsatisfactory payments as those for tithes, which does not shew any great terror from the rapacity of the collectors; and in consequence there are more suits for the recovery of tithe debts than any other equal quantity of property: from whence it has been inferred the clergy are more litigious than any other set of men; it certainly proves they are oftener *plaintiffs*, that is, oftener *complain of being injured* than others; the *success* of such suits alone can determine whether they are litigious, *i. e.* whether they generally *complain on frivolous or unjust grounds*; and I have never heard that their claims are oftener rejected on these accounts than those of other men.

But it seems unnecessary to enter into a tedious detail of particulars, since on the first glance it is improbable the clergy should be more rapacious in collecting their debts than others, except they were either worse paid, or more necessitous, which may possibly be both true, and certainly supply a fair and convincing proof that they ought, with the  
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utmost expedition, be reduced to greater poverty, and left more unprotected.

Last comes the heaviest charge of all against the nature of tithes themselves, this tax on industry, this restraint on population, by which the poor are starved, and ecclesiastics pampered—dreadful description, indeed! confirmed by the experience of ages, from Abraham to the present day; for was it not this that so remarkably thinned the tribes of Judæa, and now makes England (where tithe is paid for an infinitude of articles which are *not subject* to it in Ireland) a continued scene of desolation. But hear the proofs of these assertions, if indeed any are so dull as to think they require proof. Tithes are a tax on industry, because the more ground a man tills, and the more pains he takes in doing so, the greater the produce, and therefore the greater the tithe; and, *as the tithes exceed the value of the other nine parts*, the greater is the loss on the intire. Hence the poverty of the peasantry in the south of Ireland is fully accounted for, by their *excessive industry*, combined with the operation of tithe. Thus a man may be truly said to *save* by every acre he does not till; and hence city merchants *save* so rapidly, especially as the taxes they pay are no *restraint* on industry, their profits constantly increasing in a much greater proportion, *the contrary of which I have proved* as to tithe.

Tithes are besides a tax on the industrious farmer, and not on the landlord or consumer, because being an *imposition of yesterday*, and *illegal*. No allowance has been made or demanded in any lease formerly made, and lands untitheable *do not* set dearer on that account; and the consumer will *not believe* the countryman who tells him he pays tithe, or suffer the price of provisions to be enhanced on that score, though he *cannot help* paying for the



taxes that are laid on different objects of consumption by the House of Commons every year.

To be serious, though many of the pretexts of clamour against tithes are too frivolous to be gravely argued against, and which nothing could have procured attention to, but great prejudice in favour of any argument tending to make the established mode of supporting the clergy offensive: though it is certain tithes have never been able to check industry and population, where the causes which *really* effect this amongst us did *not exist*; that they must always be allowed for in the rent of land, and the price of provisions, and thence be paid chiefly by the landlord and consumer: though they can never increase except as the increase of profit enables the proprietor to bear them, and therefore cannot with propriety be termed a tax on industry more than any other tax; yet some circumstance there must be which has given occasion of so much complaint amongst the poor. In their collection I have endeavoured to shew it cannot be, it must therefore originate in the manner of their distribution; let us see what it is, whether it is imputable to the clergy, and how it has been remedied by the white-boy legislators.

As far as I have been able to learn it is this:—That the immediate payment of tithes is confined to tillage, while the grazier is exempt from it, except as he pays tithe of meadow. This inequality arose from the abolition of the tithe of agistment, (or tenth of the gain on the sale of black cattle) by a resolution of the persons chiefly affected by that tithe, the landed gentlemen in the House of Commons—a resolution arbitrary in itself, unconfirmed by the other parts of the legislature, and enforced by a tyrannic sanction; and certainly not chargeable on the clergy whom it deprived of a considerable

able portion of their legal revenues. I do not however find that the House of Commons, to compensate the clergy, passed a vote empowering them to demand more for the tithes graciously left them than before. Now, as this was not done, I do not see how the *poor* (except the *poor parsons*) were injured, unless the clergy, presuming on the *friendship* and *support* of the House of Commons, became more exorbitant in their demands, or the *people*, commiserating their loss, *more liberal in their prices*, suitably to the spirit which prevails so much amongst their descendants at present.

But though it may not be mathematically demonstrable, that the crown the poor cottager paid for his tithe was increased merely by his landlord's ceasing to pay a guinea for tithe of a quite different kind, yet it is not surprising if the poor, arguing from their feelings more than strict mathematics, should think themselves aggrieved at being obliged to pay any thing, when the rich paid little or nothing. How then have they proceeded to redress this injustice, and equalize the payment of tithes? Why, briefly thus—by diminishing very considerably the rates for tillage; but at the same time, either entirely annihilating or proportionally reducing the rates for meadow; thus taking care indeed to remedy the grievance they themselves labour under, *viz.* that of paying money to the clergy, but also taking care to secure, as they hope, the assistance of the richer farmers and graziers, by diminishing with equitable impartiality their share of the same grievance.

Thus, Gentlemen, have I considered the chief circumstances of those charges which are most universally and loudly urged against you—the grievances of proctors and tithes—the exorbitance of your demands, and the rapacity with which you collect

collect them—the nature of the claim itself—the inequality of its distribution, and how this has been remedied by the sagacity and equity of the white-boy legislators. And now let me ask you, as men of good sense, historic knowledge and experience in the world, are these grievances of such magnitude, and these charges so supported, that they are sufficient to produce such general discontent and hostility? No—others there must be more extensive and more powerful, which, however invidious, it is necessary to point out, that you may be able to guard against their effects.

It appears then to me, that the real cause of these effects is, that not only there are numbers who, from their opposite religious principles, must be enemies to your order; but that among those who profess themselves Protestants, a spirit of irreligion is widely diffused, manifesting itself as it is natural it should, in a neglect of the interests of that order whose business is to support a faith no longer believed, or at least little attended to—who therefore contentedly sit still, while your avowed enemies strip you of your property, in hopes that, without sharing in the trouble or scandal of the attack, they will yet enjoy a portion of the spoils, and be freed from contributing as much as they now do (pittance as it is) to your support. You will, I suppose, at first sight think this censure too severe and too general, but it is impossible for you to judge accurately of the sentiments of men about religion and the interests of the church, because you never can hear them undisguised, since the established forms of politeness and rules of conversation must always secure you an appearance of respect, and prevent men from disclosing, while in your presence, their real sentiments if offensive to you. Here then my situation enables me to judge for



for you better than you can do for yourselves; but of facts you can judge: and if you consider the measures and success of your enemies, and the inactivity of your friends, notwithstanding the powerful motives which should have united them in your defence, all which I have before stated, you will, I suppose, think my opinion of the dispositions of your supposed friends not entirely ill-founded; for surely he who, by remaining inactive, knowingly acquiesces in that destruction he might have prevented, is little less an enemy than the immediate invader.

A confirmation of this opinion, which you cannot so readily discover as I can, is derived from the common causes and subjects of outcry against the clergy; one against your extortion and rapacity, how well-founded I have before considered; another equally general cause of complaint is, the excessive wealth of the clergy, which is exaggerated beyond measure, and pointed at with surprise. We are every where told of the immense revenues of bishops, the number of fat rectories, &c. The clergy are represented as an order of men always *attentive to their own interests*, and resolving to profit by their trade; and other similar descriptions, which if a foreigner were to hear, without knowing who they were meant for, he must suppose they could apply only to a set of usurers, remarkable for accumulating fortunes from the necessities of the distressed, by odious or illegal means, without having received any education that could entitle them to possess or teach them to enjoy wealth, hoarding it during their own lives, and transmitting it to be wasted by a vulgar, ignorant, and purse-proud posterity. How would he be surprised to find that the revenues of all these men were appointed them by the law of the land, and sanctified

tified by having originated in religion, and being handed down without interruption for ages;—that they were obliged every one to receive an expensive and liberal education, which in any other profession is supposed to entitle a man to obtain for any exertion a reward more than adequate to its present trouble, as a recompence for his past preparation;—that the majority of them had but moderate incomes, perishable with themselves, and accompanied by such a necessity of preserving a respectable and liberal appearance as generally exhausted these incomes, and left the children of the possessors with no other inheritance than a good education, depending entirely on their own virtues and exertions for future support;—that indeed there are some considerable revenues and dignities appropriated to those at the head of the profession, which are generally bestowed on men whose dignified birth and powerful connections would raise them, in the general course of things, to equal dignity and wealth in any other profession, without exciting wonder or indignation;—or on men who have distinguished themselves by literary exertions, requiring such application and abilities as if directed to other pursuits would have procured equal emolument and eminence. If he were besides to be told that this description of men were excluded from all ways of acquiring wealth, except by their profession, superintending the education of youth, or engaging in the innocent and useful employment of agriculture;—that they were so little expert in making money, or eminent in worldly wisdom, that it was generally thought more easy to deal with them on cheap terms than any deputy they could appoint. If he were to be told these things, and find them true, he would certainly consider the usual pretexts of clamour against the wealth

wealth of such men as evidently visionary and ill-founded, and enquire for the real cause as something very different indeed. Nor would this enquiry be tedious or difficult, he would easily observe that in other professions more money was given without reluctance to men, not more liberally educated or superior in honesty, piety, or contempt of wealth to clergymen; What then can be the cause of this difference? Solely this, that in the former case it is believed some benefit is received from those exertions which are rewarded, in the latter not, or in other words, that men think clergymen are the *last persons* from whom any benefit can be received in this world. And I acknowledge the man who thinks it is a sufficient excuse for not paying the clergy, that no value is received from them, and produces his *own experience* as a proof of the latter, cannot be refuted. As I have never known any (I speak only from outward appearances) who asserted they never had received any advantages from the ministers of religion, and that it was probable they never should, whom in this instance, I could reasonably suspect of mistaking or distorting the truth.

To this CONTEMPT OF RELIGION, and the consequent opinion that its ministers are useless, and therefore ought not to be paid, may be attributed the tumults and outcry every where raised against the clergy, rather than to the fatal operation of tithes—" *hinc illæ lachrymæ. Hence proceed* RIVERS, ROBBERS, and WHITE BOYS with which "every county is infested." And as this cause is entirely adequate, so I do not think any other at all adequate can be assigned: The character of the clergy has been much abused by many, on this I will only say, that I have not found, nor do I believe there are any facts which prove the present



race of clergy are so much more ignorant or profligate than any of their predecessors, that a sudden and general disaffection towards them should necessarily arise, or be evidently justified by this single cause, and for the rest reply in the words of Swift, " That we have no better materials to com-  
 " pound the priesthood of than the mass of man-  
 " kind, which corrupted as it is, those who re-  
 " ceive orders must have some vices to leave be-  
 " hind them when they enter into the church,  
 " and if a few do still adhere, it is no wonder, but  
 " rather a great one that they are no worse; there-  
 " fore I cannot think ambition or love of power  
 " (*I may add love of pleasure or love of wealth*)  
 " more justly laid to their charge, than that of  
 " other men, because this would be to make re-  
 " ligion itself, or at least the best constitution of  
 " church government, answerable for the errors  
 " and depravities of human nature."\*

I cannot help remarking here, how very widely the sentiments of those who cry out against the clergy at present, differ from those which Swift ascribes to his cotemporaries in these words—† " within  
 " these last two hundred years all sorts of tempo-  
 " ral power have been wrested from the clergy,  
 " and much of their ecclesiastical, the reason or  
 " justice of which I shall not examine, but that  
 " the remedies were a little too violent with re-  
 " spect to their *possessions*, the legislature hath late-  
 " ly confessed, by the remission of their first fruits,  
 " neither do the common libellers deny this, who  
 " in their invectives only tax the church with an  
 " insatiable desire of wealth or power, (equally  
 " common to all bodies of men as well as indivi-  
 " duals) but THANK GOD that the laws have de-  
 " prived them of both."

\* Vid. Swift's sentiments of a Church of England man.

† Ibid.

The present pious successors of these devout men, seem to think their *thanksgiving* in this instance some what *premature*, as the clergy have still much greater possessions than they are willing to allow them; but imagining perhaps, that it was delivered in the prophetic manner, a type of what was to happen at the present day, are resolved to employ every exertion in their power to fulfill so desirable and happy a prediction, by compleatly stripping the clergy of what wealth and power they still retain.

\* Other causes have been assigned for the sudden and general attack on the clergy, which may perhaps have hastened or encouraged it; such as the encouragement the Roman Catholics have received from the repeal of so great a part of the penal laws against them, their expectation of acquiring speedily a considerable influence in the representative body—the number of them lately embodied and disciplined as volunteers—the debates on a bill introduced last session for the protection of the clergy. But it must be evident to every considerate man, that these causes could not operate considerably or universally had not mens minds been prepared, by a general indifference to the interests of the clergy, amongst those who profess themselves of the established church, and a consciousness of that indifference amongst those who do not. Thus had the Roman Catholics imagined, that by invading the rights of the church, they would have offended the legislature, and the landed interest of the nation, they never would hazard their newly acquired privileges by betraying a spirit of hostility in return for kindness, of turbulence, lawlessness, and riot, in requital for freeing them from restraint;

\* Vid. address to the nobility and gentry, signed *Theophilus.*  
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they would at least have waited till the gradual transfer of property and operation of time, had increased their weight in the legislature, so far as to secure the success of their measures, and procure for violence the sanction of law. And if they were prepared and emboldened to attack by their having been embodied as volunteers, the protestants would have been much more prepared and emboldened to resist by the same cause, if equally zealous on their side of the question. As to the last cause, it only shews that the reception given to that bill in the House of Commons gave your enemies good grounds (as they suppose) to believe that house was inclined to listen to all the suggestions against you, with at best not an unfavourable ear, whether their presumption was well founded or not, the future conduct of that house towards you can only decide.

Hitherto, gentlemen, I have been engaged in the unpleasant task of proving the danger which threatens your establishment. The violence and success of your enemies, and the indifference of those who ought to be your friends. I now proceed to point out such measures as seem most expedient in such a situation, and encourage you to engage in them, by proving that you cannot but meet with powerful support, as your cause is united with the temporal interests of numbers, as well as recommended by every motive that can engage the assistance of the virtuous and the wise.

The first thing obviously necessary is, that you should rouse and resolve to defend yourselves, and all unite your influence to give your measures respectability and success. Every thing already stated combines to prove the urgent necessity of such union and such activity. If your enemies are numerous and powerful, it is the more necessary to unite the friends you have in your support. If you have



have been attacked with violence you should be vigorous and resolute in resistance. In a word, if the consequence of inactivity hitherto has been defeat, nothing but ceasing to be inactive can secure you from destruction.

I can easily account for your past inactivity. You perhaps wished to give the public time and opportunity to judge fully of the intentions of your enemies. Men of a peaceable profession, you would not, as magistrates, be remarkably active in repelling force by force, but rather choose to wait until the civil power should be roused to repel and punish their violence. Unwilling to be suspected of mercenary motives, you would not be forward to enforce your own claims, or judge in your own cause; and conscious of the innocence of the charges urged against you, you could hardly believe you would be so implacably attached, or so weakly protected. Hitherto, then, your inactivity may have been excuseable, perhaps praise-worthy; but further, it would be culpable, because destructive to you. The intentions of your enemies are evidently to reduce your whole order to poverty and contempt;—the civil power has not been able to protect you—the charges against you are believed—you are loaded with the ignominy, and suffer the punishment of guilt. It behoves you, therefore, not only for your own safety, but for that of the church and your successors, whose trustees you are, to stand forward and unite—vindicate your innocence—represent your grievances to the legislature with humility, and claim redress with firmness;—and happily you can look up at this juncture to those at the head of your profession, with a well-founded confidence that they must have both the will and the power to give you effectual support—possessed of votes in the legislature—strengthened  
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by numerous friends and powerful connections—experienced in public affairs, they must be able to give your union respectability and strength; they must also be conscious that they are engaged in a common cause. That though not directly attacked, your downfall must involve theirs: their dignity and security is inseparably connected with that of the parochial clergy; if these are reduced to poverty and contempt, the bishops cannot hope long to enjoy their riches unenvied or undiminished, or preserve their dignity undebased. But were their interests wholly unconnected with yours, the consciousness of what is due to religion, to virtue, to consistency of character, must make them active in your defence; they must feel themselves placed in a high situation, entrusted with an important charge, and answerable to God and the world for the welfare of the sacred order over which they preside, and the establishment of true Christianity in this nation. In such a crisis they must be well assured that to be inactive is to betray that trust, that he who now retires from the council of the nation, under whatever pretext he may endeavour to hide his shame from himself, cannot hide it from the world: No—he cannot but be loaded with well-merited ignominy now, and supply a name to be handed down with infamy to posterity. “*He who is not with us is against us,*” was the language of your divine founder, and may now be yours. But I have better hopes—it cannot be but they will act the part that becomes them; they will appear in their true dignity, as the supreme guardians of, and acting in concert with the whole order, for the common advantage; they will collect from you exact information to lay before parliament, and have their representations to one house supported by your petitions to both; they will  
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take the lead in every measure, urge your claims with vigour, and guard your interests with vigilance. Trusting, therefore, that you will all unite in carrying into execution such measures as are most requisite to redress your losses and secure your rights, allow me to suggest some which seem likely to conduce to those purposes.

I observed before what such of you as are remote from the metropolis may hardly believe, and such as inhabit it constantly could not fully perceive, that the crimes committed by the white-boys in the remote parts of the kingdom, are in this place scarcely believed, or extremely palliated, or supposed to have been entirely caused, and almost entirely justified, by your extortion and rapacity; which are painted in the strongest colours, and received with implicit belief: and that the innocence of those well-meaning, but deluded wretches, receives strong confirmation from their having almost every where escaped legal punishment, which is more easily and readily accounted for, by supposing they did not deserve it, than by enquiring into the real causes which protected them, though they did. Such a prepossession cannot but have dangerous influence, in determining the voice of the public, as well as biasing the opinion of the legislature itself, many of whose members have it not always in their power, however well-inclined, to enter into a minute examination of facts, and correct the errors of public fame by their own accurate information. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for you to remove these prejudices; which will be easily done, by appointing some of the most respectable of your body in each county, to publish a brief, but authentic journal of the violences which it is morally certain were committed by the white-boys in that county, specifying the time and place



place, and the persons to whom they were offered. This it will be easy to do, though it might have been difficult to point out the particular individuals who committed those violences, or procure such proof as could legally convict them.

For similar reasons it is absolutely necessary for you to publish an account of the modus of setting tithe in each parish, and the average rates at which it sets, compared with those established for the same produce at the adjacent market towns, for a certain time past—suppose seven years. Thus you will shew the public the real extent of the violences which your enemies have committed, and how little real cause there was to justify them. And if you refuse or neglect to do this, it may even with the most candid men produce some suspicious unfavourable to you, for though innocence may sometimes disdain condescending to confute calumny, the same apparent effect may proceed from conscious guilt or stubborn fullness, and it is seldom either a wise or a safe measure, because the public will certainly pass a decisive sentence, though the accused may contumaciously refuse to plead at its bar; it therefore exposes, unprotected to the greatest hazard, what is most obnoxious to irreparable injury, our good name, which it is surely worth while to secure, when it can be done by the easy means of speaking truth. Nor think that because these things are known in every part to some one or other, it is therefore useless to collect and unite them, so as to put it in every one's power to acquire the knowledge of all. The proceedings of the right-boys seem to be so uniform, regular, and consistent, that their beauty, utility, and importance must needs be imperfectly known, till they are connected in one system and contemplated in one view. And as it is possible there may in some  
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few instances have been abuses in the management of tithes, and you all know how apt men are to argue from particulars to generals, and that one instance of injustice must be more talked of, and therefore more attended to, than fifty of moderation; the only possible way to open the eyes of the public, and convince them of the general equity and moderation of your conduct, is, to exhibit that conduct in one view to their inspection. I therefore call on you, as you value your own interests, or the regard due to your sacred profession, "NOT  
 " TO LET YOUR GOOD BE EVIL SPOKEN OF," to stand forward and speak the truth—that your adversaries should not be rewarded for their violence, nor you punished for having suffered it. These things are the first, the easiest, and the most necessary to be done—necessary to silence and shame your enemies, to make those who have been hitherto doubtful and neutral your friends, and supply your friends with new motives of zeal in your support, and new topics of argument in your defence.

The measures I have now recommended would certainly come with more respectability and effect, authorised by the solemn sanction of a public assembly, but yet they are in the power of any individual amongst you, for any man may draw up a brief journal of the proceedings of your enemies, or a comparison of the rates of tithes, with those of the adjacent markets, and present them to the public; and surely *some one* may be found in each county willing to take so much trouble for the common cause. But what I shall next recommend, as it is absolutely necessary for the preservation of your common rights, so it requires still more strongly a general co-operation.—You cannot but know there are many who say, and seem to believe, that the attacks which have been made on you have,

in most places, done you no real injury—that they have indeed obliged you to take your property out of the hands of those common plunderers, the proctors and tithe-farmers, but have not diminished it; as the rates allowed you by the generosity of your white-boy friends yield even more than you before received. And it is said, that as you have in general chose to acquiesce in the terms offered you by those delegates of the people, rather than wait for an appeal to the legislature, the injury you have suffered is either none at all, or very trifling, and requires no public interposition; for that though these rustic reformers proceeded in rather a rough manner, yet their intentions were kind, and it must be wholly unnecessary to take your affairs out of the hands of agents at once so judicious, so active, and so honest.

Whether you have as good reason to be contented as this statement supposes you, yourselves best know; but certainly it will be supposed you are not materially aggrieved, while you offer no complaint, and that your losses are not worth recompensing, while you think them not worth stating. It is therefore absolutely necessary that you should unite in each county, state the losses you have each sustained, whether by the entire subtraction of your tithes, or the dimunition of the usual rates, dictated by violence and consented to from terror; if you do this fairly and boldly, and call on the legislature to redress you, your claim cannot be rejected. Some regard to order, justice, and religion, must actuate the legislature, and the executive power must be anxious to redress injuries, which it was its duty, and seems to have been its inclination to prevent, though unhappily it had not the power. I am told a great law authority has declared, it will be the duty of parliament to



to levy your losses on each country, as they could not have been sustained had those who possessed the power and property in that county set themselves to oppose your enemies with activity and firmness. This opinion seems founded on truth and justice, and should it be carried into execution, would effectually secure you against being again attacked, and left again unprotected. This then is the only way in which you can convince the public you have been really injured. Procure redress for what you have suffered already, and security against suffering the same every returning year;—a measure not more necessary for your safety than consistent with your character and profession, since it requires you to do nothing more than to speak the truth, and be ready to prove your allegations.

The reasonableness and necessity of the measures I have now proposed seem so obvious, that I think they can scarcely raise any difference of opinion about their expediency. The last and most important of all you will, I fear, be more divided in your opinions on; that is, whether it will be wise to consent to, or express your wish for a commutation of tithes, or rather insist on preserving your antient rights, and claim the assistance of government to secure and enforce them. To consider this point as briefly, and at the same time as fully and clearly as I can, I will examine, whether any equitable commutation is practicable; next, whether, if practicable, it would be likely to silence discontents for the present, and prevent their return; and finally, whether the reasons which seem to recommend your consenting to such a step are strong enough to balance the inconveniencies which must attend it.

To effect any equitable commutation, it is acknowledged on all hands to be necessary, that the value of the different livings should be preserved unaltered, since it is doubtful whether the legislature has constitutionally a power, and certainly it has no right in equity, to deprive some clergymen of their present incomes, and increase those of others, when the former have not acted so as justly to subject them to such a punishment, or the latter so as to merit such a reward:—And the only reason why a commutation is at all necessary, is to relieve those engaged in tillage, who are generally the most poor and industrious, by transferring the burthen on the more wealthy and less industrious graziers. For *I doubt* whether the parliament will have sagacity enough to discern the practicability and equity of the plan adopted by the white-boy legislators, which would relieve both poor and rich *equally* from *all burthens*.

To unite these two objects, viz. to preserve the present value of livings, and at the same time proportion what each man shall contribute to the support of the clergy in some degree to his landed property, will, I believe, prove a complicated task. Let us examine it particularly.

The property to be thus altered is spread through every part of the kingdom, however remote or uncultivated, but its average quantity in each parish depends on circumstances almost peculiar to that parish itself—such as the usual quantity of tillage—the different articles tithable—the established modes of valuing tithe, in some by the acre, in others by the quantity of produce—the proportion of the average rate of tithes to the average market prices, in some places almost equal to them, in most very much less—and various other circumstances, which must be all considered by a legislator,  
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who would preserve the value of livings unaltered: So that no act of parliament appointing the rate which each man should pay, could with equity extend beyond one parish, or at most two or three adjoining; and as a preparation for these acts, it seems necessary that every parish be accurately surveyed—the different rent rolls of every landlord examined, to ascertain the value of his ground and the proportion of rent and tithe paid by each parish, in order to determine what rates shall be substituted for tithes in each parish, and precautions taken to preserve the proportion of these rates to the rents unvaried.

In determining these rates, it will be indispensibly necessary to adjust the regulations of the general laws, so as to preserve an equitable distribution of the new impost, according to a variety of local and obscure distinctions, whether it is to be paid by the landlord or tenant; thus, if to be paid by the tenant, lands which are tithe free and thence have been let at considerable advanced rents should be exempt, lest the tenant should thus be doubly burthened. The impost also should be proportioned, not to the rent, but to the profit of the land, so that some grounds let at small rents should yet pay most of the new impost, because they yield most profit, as being let on old leases.—Others, not because though the rent is small, the profit is also small. Similar difficulties would occur as to landlords; thus, those who let their lands at advanced rents because tithe free, should now pay more in proportion to these rents than others, and care should be taken not to diminish still more the value of lands let already too cheap, or make one landlord pay more than another, merely because his estate was of poorer ground, and therefore let at lower rents. If to avoid these inconveniencies, every rent roll



is indiscriminately taxed in proportion to its quantity, we shall have indeed a general rule sufficiently clear, and which will compleatly redress all grievances, if totally and violently altering the present state of things can do so, since those rich grazing counties which now contribute very little in proportion to the clergy would then have almost the entire burthen of supporting them, but perhaps this is the very thing wished, as the gentlemen of those counties have such zeal for the church, that they wish to support not only their own parsons, but all those of the poor counties adjacent. Besides all this, care must be taken to insert in the new laws clear and strong clauses to prevent the landlord at the expiration of every lease from demanding an additional rent to recompence himself, and the tenants from consenting to pay it, except perhaps that the caution is unnecessary, as it is so *unusual* amongst Irish landlords to raise their rents, or Irish tenants to outbid each other.

Tithes are divided amongst great multitudes in very unequal shares, handed down in some lay families, from generation to generation for ages past, leased out and purchased, and settled with all the variety of legal forms, and it is required to substitute a new species of property on different principles, to be paid in a different manner, and by different persons, and yet preserve all these shares distinct, and of equal value, without any possibility of producing confusion or altercation.

As tithes now stand, they are so calculated that every man is well aware of what he must pay—cannot be subject to pay more but by his own voluntary act, and when his increase of profit must enable him to bear it without loss; and it is required to find out a new mode of levying the same sums which must subject every man to different  
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imposts independent of his own acts, freeing some who have hitherto paid much, and loading others who have hitherto paid little, and this with such evident equity and exact consideration, as to silence all murmurs and leave no room for future discontents.

The property to be removed is such, that it must necessarily fall and rise with the value of money, and which cannot be raised to an exorbitant price, without the express consent of the purchaser; and for this is to be substituted another of a determinate kind, and yet not land, so as that it shall vary constantly with the value of money, never oppressing him who is to pay, nor failing the expectation of him who is to receive it.

All these things are to be done; and to do those things, it is necessary to repeal the present code of tithe laws, which are as old as any others in the realm, to erase all the reports and records of the different cases about tithes, which have been already decided as a burthen to our law books, and to draw up a new code on different principles, without any precedents to guide or assist their formation, so equitable in their arrangement of property as to preclude discontent, and so free from ambiguity as to leave no room for debate about their meaning, and no possibility of eluding their commands.—But let me correct myself, I have mistated this matter. The old code of laws is to be retained, I suppose, for those parts of the kingdom which have not expressed any discontent, and the reforming code will extend for the present no farther than the sagacity of the white boy legislators has discovered the existence of grievances, and *led the way* for parliament, ready however to extend itself to other parts, as the same sagacity shall enlarge its researches.

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All these things are to be done. I have heard much of the OMNIPOTENCE of parliament, and therefore do not deny but it may have all power to do all those things; and indeed would be happy to find the experiment executed to the satisfaction of all parties, as it would, I think, afford a compleat proof, not only of the omnipotence of parliament, but of its infinite patience, and perfect infallibility—attributes which must banish all anxiety about the nature and consequences of the measures of the legislature, and produce such implicit faith in them as would necessarily secure public tranquillity, the constant wish of every true patriot.

The circumstances already considered may help us to decide, whether any plan of commutation can be proposed likely to silence discontents for the present, and remove all grounds for their revival. If each parish is to pay hereafter the same proportion it does at present to the clergy, *let us suppose* a commutation so wisely planned, that such proportion is fixed in each parish, and so distributed, that every man should pay a share of the entire, exactly proportioned to his landed property. Were the whole kingdom one parish, perhaps the rich might be disinterested enough to bear every additional burthen without a murmur or struggle, from their zeal to relieve the poor; but as different parishes would pay very different proportions, they must be taxed unequally, *i. e.* not in the same proportion to their rents; so that a man stepping from one parish to another would find himself placed *under a different scheme of taxes, without any apparent natural reason*; and it is hard to say why the poor man in one parish, who found himself taxed as much as his rich neighbour in another, would not have as much reason to complain of his industry being taxed, and his property loaded with unreasonable burthens,



burthens, as in the present situation of things; with this difference, that at present his tithe depends on the quantity he *chooses* to till, and increases only when his profit also increases. But on the new scheme, if obliged to pass into another parish, his contribution to the support of the clergy would increase without any increase of his profit, or diminution of his industry. Thus it appears a commutation is not such a certain mode of stopping even present discontents. But what would be the more remote consequences of such a distribution? It is probable men would, as they found opportunity, flock into those parishes where, *cæteris paribus*, the proportion contributed to the support of the clergy was least, which would therefore become more populous, and require closer attention from the clergyman than before; and yet, from the fixed proportion of tithes to rent, would pay less than tracts growing every day less populous, which would probably in some years produce as much, and as well-grounded, discontent as at present, and afford as just a pretext of unsettling and new modelling the ecclesiastical establishment.

Another objection arises from the same principles. At present there are parishes so little tilled, and so thinly inhabited by Protestants, as only to afford sustenance to one clergyman, and to require the attendance of no more. Now, if the income of such parish was fixed even, suppose it of such a kind as to fall and rise with the value of money, yet it could never maintain more than one clergyman, though by the alteration of circumstances it might, if the present tithe laws continued, be able to maintain two or three, and require them; in which case a bishop could divide it as expediency should direct.

The objections now stated apply some or all of them to every plan of commutation (not of land\*) I have ever heard or conceived, which may all be reduced to three heads:—Some fixed proportion of the new impost to the rent of each acre, varying with the quality of the ground, and present rate paid by the parish, which must vary as I have stated, and afford ground for all the discontents which I have shewn must proceed from it. Thus the same portion of the acreable rent which might double the income of the clergymen in the rich grazing counties in the south, would starve them in the poor ones.—Or secondly, some certain quantity of a particular produce of the earth, to be paid by each parish annually, or its price, which must vary in the same way, and give rise to the same complaints.—Or some fixed portion of the acreable rents, or fixed land tax, to be paid indiscriminately every where, and the sum total distributed in due proportions amongst the clergy.

But I am weary of proving the uselessness and folly of plans, every one inconsistent with the other, and all with reason and equity. Of proving that men who are dissatisfied with the present system for supporting the clergy, for scarce any reason but because it is a system for *supporting the clergy*, will quarrel with any that can be substituted for the same cause. Of shewing that plans will not extend to the whole kingdom, or any considerable part of it, which were rashly formed, by short-sighted men, from a cursory view of the supposed grievances existing in their own particular parish or estate. It were easy to go on, for absurdity is a wide field; but I will close all my objections with this short one; that every plan of com-

\* Vid. Postscript.

mutation is to be objected to, because it is a *plan of commutation*—because it changes an old and established, and known system, for we know not what: for, to the inconveniencies which the dullest man may foresee will attend a commutation, may be added, a great sum, indeed, for yet unforeseen evils; since it has been ever found that any total alteration of an extensive system of laws or property, brings with it numberless inconveniencies which no sagacity could foresee: this I leave to be considered by those who think the slightest inconveniencies justify the most extensive changes, and that all grievances must cease if the circumstance complained of is altered, whatever consequences may attend such an alteration.

I am now to consider whether you, Gentlemen, ought, in prudence or the regard due to the interest of your successors, as well as your own, to consent to a commutation. It would seem unnecessary to add much to what has been said already, in order to prove that you ought not; for if no equitable commutation is practicable, and no possible commutation would effectually remove discontent, or silence complaint, you certainly ought not, and both these things have, I think, been already proved; but I wish to leave as little doubt as possible on any man's mind, and therefore will compare, as accurately as I can, the reasons on both sides.

I know there are many amongst you so tired out with the disgusting minutiae of bargaining and enforcing payment from every petty cottager, as to be ready to throw up your present incomes, and take chance for receiving any other, though much less, if secure of having it paid regularly, and without trouble to you. Others, so alarmed with the late disturbances, and so apprehensive of their continuance and return, as to be ready to make any sacri-



rice that would effectually restore and preserve peace. But you should remember that these are but temporary and local inconveniencies, not to be put into competition with any universal and lasting evils, which would affect the establishment of your whole order, and the general interests of religion.

As to the first, you might perhaps in many places find some expedient which would lessen the burthen on you, without oppressing the poor.—Thus you might lease to the several head landlords the tithes of their whole estates for seven years, provided your incumbency lasted so long, at their average value for an equal period past. They might easily incorporate these with their rent, and levy them in the manner least distressing to their tenantry ;—encourage tillage, by diminishing the rates for each acre as the number of acres increased ;—while you would preserve your just rights, by making regular valuation each year during the lease, never setting for a longer period, and at the end of each period renewing your bargain, as the intervening valuations and other circumstances should point out was most equitable and advantageous to all parties ;—avoiding, by the shortness of the leases and the constant valuation, any modus or limitation to a fixed sum of money being established against you. This scheme, or some such as this, might in many places relieve you immediately ; but certainly if you wait with a little patience, you must be relieved in time every where. As industry and commerce, which are daily increasing, diffuse wealth and knowledge through the kingdom, the clergy as well as every other order of men would partake in the benefits of such a change—the people, more enlarged and liberal in their sentiments, would acknowledge your claims more readily, and pay them with less reluctance—the

the increase of population and agriculture would increase your property, and the diffusion of plenty and riches would cause it to be paid more certainly and satisfactorily : all which advantages you would probably forfeit, by rashly consenting to an ill-planned and inadequate commutation, to get rid of your present distress. As to the alarm from the late disturbances, he must have little confidence indeed in the justice of parliament, and the vigour of government, who should suppose that if the final resolution of the legislature be to preserve the present mode of levying tithes, there will not be sufficient care taken to form such legal provisions, where wanting, as may enable you to recover your rights with certainty and ease, and secure to you such assistance as may effectually execute such provisions. And whether you were concerned or not, it is indispensably necessary for government to adopt the most speedy and decisive measures to restore the peace of the country, and punish and restrain offenders, who are now emboldened by past impunity, to proceed to still greater outrages. This once effected, the people will feel the necessity of acquiescing in your just claims ; and as an unsuccessful attack always weakens and dispirits the invaders, and secures the power it was intended to destroy, so you will be more secure than ever.— That if the late attack on your rights is once completely defeated, no such will be again ventured. You ought therefore to consider the expediency of a commutation, unbiassed by terror from the late disturbances.

To enable you to do this, let us apply the common principles of dealing between man and man to this subject. Any man of sense, proposing an exchange, would consider, first, whether his own property was circumstanced so as that he would probably dispose of it to advantage, and receive in exchange



exchange what it was intrinsically worth. Next, whether the property offered him was of as permanent a nature, and as likely to retain its present estimation as that to be resigned. And lastly, whether the legal title to it would be equally secure.

Now, as to the first point, your warmest friends promise no more than that you shall receive an equivalent, and how is this to be estimated? why, by the *average rate* at which your livings have let for a † certain period past. Now it is certain that this average rate never could in any parish exceed the real value of the living, and there is a moral certainty that in numbers it has fallen very considerably short of it, from the absence or inactivity of the incumbents, from the poverty of the people, and the temper of the times, which has made them unwilling to pay the full value, and reduced the prices of tithes for some time past very considerably, from the bad execution of the laws, which has had the same effect in many places in the south of Ireland. Thus I know, that since the acts intended to facilitate the collection of small dues were past, the clergymen who were by these acts to obtain redress from the neighbouring justices of peace, as final judges, have never been able to recover them at all, or at least to a very inconsiderable amount: Such has been the equity and activity of these judges. Now all these causes are temporary and local, such as must vanish if the kingdom grows rich and industrious, and the laws are effectually executed, which surely it is to be supposed will be done some time or other. No property therefore could be exposed to sale under greater disadvantages. You would be as imprudent

† I here *suppose* the average rate is known, as the Bishop of Cloyne has sufficiently shewn that it is almost impossible equitably to determine this rate.—Vid. page 65, &c.



in offering tithes to be exchanged now, as a gentleman would be in offering his estate to sale at a time when the improvements were in a ruinous state, the farms let to bad tenants, and the title supposed to be disputed, though he were morally certain that in a few years the legality of his title would be universally acknowledged, the improvements repaired, and the farms let to secure and rich tenants. But is it *so certain* that you would receive an equivalent even for the present value of tithes? Is the spirit of equity and consideration for your order *so general and strong*, that you have no reason to fear any diminution of your property, especially when it is thought you will be glad to take any thing rather than keep what you have? And men will think they do you no injury by diminishing your incomes, provided they free you from your present unpleasant situation; only this is certainly in your favour, that as the purpose of a commutation is to transfer the burthen from the poor to the rich, and the rich are to be the regulators of such commutation, they *will not have either the will or the power* to diminish these burthens, by lessening your incomes. To these circumstances you should add, that if an adequate commutation should once be effected, if it originated at your own desire, or was sanctioned by your own consent, you would find it very difficult indeed to effect any change in it, and would probably be not a little censured, should you even attempt it. — Much therefore is hazarded by consenting to any plan of commutation; and it does not appear that any present gain is at all to be expected. Whether it is wise to put yourselves in this situation, you can best judge.

We are next to consider the kind of property to be resigned, and whether you may expect in its place any as little liable to diminution, by accident

dents, by time, or fluctuation of value. It is evident that tithes must always be equally and readily saleable, except illegal combinations prevent it, that it must fall and rise exactly in the same proportion with the value of money, the quantity of produce, and the number of consumers, and that if your right to tithes was secured, the value of them must rise as the industry and commerce of the kingdom increases. Now what other kind of property could you expect so advantageously circumstanced—it is acknowledged by every one that a stated sum of money would be wholly unjust, since its comparative value might in time be so lessened as to be entirely inadequate to the support of its possessor, as has happened in many parts of England and Wales. If a particular kind of produce, as potatoes or wheat, were substituted, yet the value of that particular produce compared with the other necessities of life might be very much diminished by circumstances; thus, if the peasantry grew rich enough or sufficiently skilful in tillage, to afford living on corn as in England, potatoes would sink in value; and probably people would endeavour to substitute some other kind of provision in place of that assigned for the support of the clergy, in order to lower its price, and thus lessen their own burthens.

A certain proportion of the new impost to rent would not be liable to these objections, but whether paid by the landlords or tenants would be such an obvious diminution of their incomes as would render such a mode of supporting the clergy more generally offensive, and more an object of constant cavil and depredation, than any other.

Last of all, the security of the title on which you would hold any new kind of property is to be considered; and here it is that a commutation appears to be little less than a surrender of your present property.

property, without any certain equivalent. For what certainty will there be in the possession of a property, totally of a new kind, for which there must be as many acts of parliament as there are parishes, ascertaining exactly the sums to be raised—the articles on which they are to be levied—the mode of collecting—an omission or ambiguity in any one of which circumstances may deprive a clergyman at once of perhaps half his income, or leave him destitute of legal means to enforce payment, and especially when there are no precedents that could either regulate the formation of these acts, or determine their construction. The answer to this, it will be said is obvious; when these ambiguities in the words or deficiencies in the provisions of the acts are discovered, it will be easy for parliament to explain the one and supply the other; or in other words, the clergy may safely make the experiment, have their property placed on a new foundation and subject to new regulations; if it is badly done now, why, it will be better managed another time? It will be but to wait some few score years, and have a sufficient number of acts passed to amend acts, explaining acts entitled acts to repeal the present tithe laws; it is but to fee a few lawyers and have a sufficient number of suits carried on and cases decided, and then you will have precedents enough in your favour, and be *almost as secure as at present*, when you have the most secure title of any men in the nation to your property, guarded about by common law and statute law, from the very first dawnings of law amongst us, in which no possible doubt can arise, either about the quantity of your claim or the mode of recovering it, not already decided. Where the ingenuity of lawyers can hunt out no new ambiguity, and the spirit of litigiousness seeks in vain for



new pretexts of legal contention. This will be a commutation indeed, a commutation of tranquillity for law suits, certainly for uncertainty, of a property venerable for its origin and antiquity, secured by law and prescription, which every man knows the extent of, for one newly created, which the possessors will scarcely know how much or what it is intended to be, where you will probably purchase every additional security by some diminution in the quantum of your right, which at its commencement will be designed only to equal what you at present possess.

Thus, in every possible view in which a commutation can be considered, it appears entirely inadmissible, or at least highly inexpedient, impracticable at least on equitable principles. If practicable, ill calculated to remove complaints or grievances for the present, or prevent their return, offering nothing to be gained at the present, and attended with the hazard of losing much and irreparably, exchanging a property of a known extent and permanent nature for one you know not what, and your title to which is ancient, secure, and undisputed, for a new insecure and disputable title.

And what are the pretexts on which your consent to such a step is required? The oppressive nature of tithes, or their great abuse from the exorbitance of your demands and the rapacity of your exactions, pretexts which, though possibly well founded in some few instances, must, as it seems, be in the general merely chimerical. Now, who would call for the repeal of any body of laws merely because they were in some few instances rigorously executed, or ill applied? Who would repeal the laws against debtors, or call for *tabulae novae*, because some creditors are *relentlessly rigid*? Who would  
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deprive landlords of their rights because some few may require exorbitant rents, or extort them with minute rapacity. And why should reasoning that would not apply to any thing else in the world apply to tithes.

But it is said tithes are the chief cause of the miseries of the poor: if this were true, it would, indeed, be a decisive argument with every humane clergyman to consent to an exchange; but I think it must be evident to every man who considers the state of the south of Ireland, that this is a gross misrepresentation—that the miseries of the poor are owing to very different causes, and can only be removed by the gradual increase of commerce, industry and wealth, the relaxation of rents, and increase of the price of labour. Let no clergyman then suppose, that by sacrificing his rights he would rescue the people from distress; he might, like the widow in the gospel, throw in his mite with equal good intention, but with the same effect; his *whole living* would, indeed, be lost, but those on whom it was bestowed would be little relieved.

I have now stated all the measures I have been able to think of, that seem most necessary, at the present very critical juncture, to redress your past injuries, and secure your rights in future, *viz.* that you should immediately and demonstratively convince the public of the violence and enormity of your enemies, by publishing a brief, but authentic journal of their proceedings, and how little real cause they had for such violences, by stating the rates you have generally received for your property;—to demand restitution for your past losses, and protection in future, with that confidence which your innocence and a due reliance on the justice of the legislature, and the vigour of

government, ought to inspire ;—and finally, to insist on preserving your ancient rights, as any commutation would be useless to the public, and highly injurious to you. Nothing now remains but to encourage you, to these exertions, by shewing that you must be strongly and effectually supported, not only by the power and influence of those who are the heads and guardians of your order, but also by numbers of the most respectable and powerful laymen, bound by interest, and engaged by the strongest ties of duty, to support your just demands, and defend you against every enemy.

And here a strong defence of the clerical order arises, from the same cause that once impoverished and weakened it, even the great share of the tithe of the kingdom, which is placed in lay hands, and forms part of their regular estates. Such men must be bound to support your just rights, because by deserting them they abandon their own; they must clearly see, that to exchange an old and determinate property, of a permanent nature, and held by a secure title, for another of they know not what nature and extent, and on a new and insecure title, must be ill policy indeed: they must also think themselves bound in honour to protect you, as they cannot but be conscious that much of the clamours against tithes, though indiscriminately levelled against the clergy, has originated from the manner lay impropiators have managed theirs, who, conceiving they ought to dispose of tithe at the same rates with any other property of the same value, have demanded so much more for it than clergymen have usually presumed to do, as afforded a pretext to complain of grievance and exaction; the lay impropiators are therefore bound by honour, as well as interest, by a regard for their reputation, as well as their purse, to vindicate the  
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character of the clergy from calumny, and defend their rights against usurpation. But besides these, all who have the patronage of livings vested in their families, must be anxious to preserve their value unimpaired, which, though no immediate addition to their own incomes, enables them to gratify the calls of friendship, reward the claims of merit, or provide for the younger branches of their families; these are particularly interested in your preservation. And since on the death of every clergyman, his livings revert to the public, and every man who has merit or interest enough has a chance of enjoying them; and as men of obscure birth often raise themselves by their literary exertions and services to a high rank in your order, every protestant is interested in preserving those rights, and that property, the reversion of which his family and descendants have so fair a chance of enjoying, even if we consider pecuniary motives alone. Ill; however, would it fare with you if there were no more powerful motives than these to interest the laity in your support. No; your claims are much more strong, and more universal, extending to every man of whatever religion, who has any regard for law, any reverence for the constitution, any anxiety to preserve peace, or any property to secure from depredation; and conformably to this, one of your most active defenders, who has received the public thanks of your order for his exertions in your support, is a \* Roman Catholic nobleman, who had good sense enough to see, that he who suffers laws to be violated with impunity, and property attacked without resistance, suffers the only protection which secures himself to be destroyed—and virtue

\* Lord Viscount Kenmare, at Killarney.

enough

enough to resolve, to punish guilt and defend innocence, whatever may be the religious professions of those to whom these characters apply. Surely the same motives, when duly weighed, must unite in the same cause multitudes who have hitherto not sufficiently attended to the real state of things. The country gentlemen have probably in many places been influenced by the loud and general clamours against the clergy, to believe there must be more causes for them than they could themselves discover, and therefore may have resolved to lie still till the people should fully discover and prove their grievances, and point out the means of redressing them; but sufficient time has now elapsed, and no specific charges of exorbitance or extortion have been any where advanced, much less proved, though the clamours have continued unabated.—Nor have the peasantry or yeomanry any where been able to state their grievances, or point out in what circumstance they ought to be redressed.

Others who have good inclinations, though but little closeness of observation, have not been yet sufficiently sensible of the danger with which every man is threatened, when law and order is violated with impunity, and the rabble suffered to extend their outrages without controul; and they seem to have supposed that the right-boys would never extend their reforming hand beyond the grievances they at first complained of, or ever attempt an encroachment on the rights of so powerful a body as the landholders of Ireland. But the *resolutions* of the \* MUNSTER PARLIAMENT may at length convince them of their mistake, and rouse them from

\* Vide the proclamation in the Freeman's Journal, December 9th, 1786.

their lethargy. That assembly has resolved to extend their REFORM to the GRIEVANCES OF RENT; and it is easy to foresee, that if they do not meet with vigorous and immediate opposition, this REFORM will be carried on with double *rapidity* and double *zeal*, as the grievance of paying rent is so much more *oppressive* and *universal* than that of tithe. The country gentlemen may therefore now judge with certainty whether they may suffer your rights to be wrested from you by a lawless multitude, perfectly secure, that they will be able by a word to curb the rapacity of successful violence, and calm turbulence into peace, whenever their own repose is disturbed, or their own property attacked.

Nor have your enemies been less industrious to rouse government in your defence, than to convince the men of landed property that their former lenity was mistaken, and their acquiescence impolitic. Their proceedings have been a continued insult on the executive power, as if they were certain their cause was favoured and their measures approved by government, and the steps taken against them a mere mockery—forms requisite to preserve the appearances of decency; they have continued their outrages uninterrupted by judges and courts of law, untterrified by the military force, in contempt of the commands and defiance of the power of government, only roused by opposition to carry on their depredations more violently and universally—to levy contributions in support of their good cause with more rigour—and discover new ingenuity in the invention, and *new \* activity in the practice of cruelty*—shewing

\* For a proof of this I refer to the 103d and 104th pages of the Bishop of Cloyne's pamphlet.



their *veneration* for the supreme authority, by imitating its language and assuming its privileges.— They too have their commissions, and their laws, and their parliaments; and to evince still more that they value his Majesty's rights and privileges *as much as their own*, they have resolved to use them as their own too, to diminish and modify them as their legislative wisdom dictates. Thus they have resolved to DIMINISH HEARTH-MONEY, as too oppressive, BY ONE HALF; and I have been assured by a very respectable collector of a southern county, that his Majesty's officers were obliged to suspend the collection till the arrival of force to support them.

It is therefore necessary for government either to crush at once your enemies, who are also theirs, or give up their authority, and yield the sceptre to these more able legislators. And this is as necessary for their honour as their safety. Many are not ashamed to say, that the insurgents had good grounds to rely on the acquiescence of government, and that the ill success of the measures taken to defeat their violence arose from the want, not of power, but of will, to act with vigour and effect. To me this appears a libel, too scandalous to be credible:—No, it is impossible but government must have wished to protect you, and failed in doing so only because they were not sufficiently aware of the cunning and the strength of your enemies: they must therefore resolve to vindicate their character from every such imputation, and prove that the guardianship of the laws and constitution is entrusted to men able and willing to restrain violence, punish guilt, and maintain religion and virtue. This they must do, or cease to be a government. Your cause then is theirs; you are attacked,

attacked, but through you their dignity and authority is also attacked:—All must be secured, or all overturned together.

But it is not only those who are united with you by the prospect of pecuniary advantage, or roused by the indignation every honest man must feel at lawless violence and wanton cruelty, and the interest every considerate man must take in the preservation of public order and public peace, who must necessarily unite in your defence. Reason and justice, law and the constitution, are indeed your advocates, and sure their voice will be listened to; but a still more venerable advocate remains that pleads aloud in your behalf, and will not, cannot be despised—even true religion and pure christianity—which must sink into obscurity and oblivion, if its teachers are reduced first to poverty, and next, what must necessarily follow, degraded into ignorance and contempt. Hence it is your sure defence must be derived, for it cannot be but there must be multitudes of the most honest and industrious among the lower, and the most powerful and respectable among the higher classes, sincere believers of Christianity, and therefore firm friends to you, who have hitherto been inactive because judging of others by themselves, they were not sensible of your danger, or because they waited till the fit time to enterpose should come, and with the retired modesty of virtue, and the amiable meekness of religion, were unwilling to blazon forth professions of friendship among crowds, or prematurely and ostentatiously display their resolutions of future firmness in your support; but the time is now arrived when it becomes all such to step forward with an honest indignation, and avow they are not ashamed of the faith they profess, nor slow to protect the ministers who teach

it, to protect them not with violence and persecution, but against lawless violence and unmerited persecution. Men of such a character, and united in such a cause, will not, cannot be resisted; vice and infidelity will fly appalled before them, and after skulking for a while beneath the false pretext of some temporary grievance, when driven from that despicable refuge will sink without a struggle into silence and disgrace.

## EUPHRANOR.



## P O S T S C R I P T.

**T**WO days before the preceeding sheets were sent to press, the Bishop of Cloyne's pamphlet appeared; had their author foreseen that such a writer would have laid this subject so clearly and fully before the public, he never would have attempted writing them; and on seeing this had been done, he deliberated whether he should not suppress them, but on finding his conclusions as to the inexpediency of a commutation agreed with those of the Bishop, the sanction of so great an authority confirmed him in believing their publication could do no injury to the cause of the clergy, and he could not refrain from gratifying the earnest wish he had long felt to make some effort, however feeble, in their support. He, however, resolved to erase some observations relative to the inexpediency of commutation for land, which has been so fully proved by the Bishop, that it must be presumptuous and useless to add any thing further on it.

For the same reason he has not touched on the mode of proceeding in suits for tithes in the ecclesiastical courts, so ably defended, first by Theophilus, and next by the Bishop's pamphlet. In other things his reasonings and plan are somewhat different from these writers, but still he fears he has too often, though undesignedly, been led by the nature of his plan to repeat arguments stated before with more ability, yet trusts the goodness of his intention will be accepted as an excuse.

The author begs leave to suggest to the clergymen in the southern parts of Ireland, whether it would not be expedient that a committee should be formed by the most respectable clergymen in and about the capital of each county, to carry the measures recommended in the preceding sheets, or any others they should judge expedient, into execution. Each of these might collect the accounts of the outrages of the white-boys, and the average rates of tithes compared with the prices in the adjacent markets in their county, compile and lay them before the public. But above all, they might procure exact statements of the losses each tithe proprietor, whether layman or clergyman, had sustained, and prepare a petition praying redress from parliament, to be handed about and signed by every person so injured. This measure is easy, can be carried into execution without loss of time, is attended with none of the inconveniencies and liable to none of the objections which I have been informed prevented a general meeting of delegates from the clergy of each county in Dublin; can give no offence to any rank or description of men, and some such seems absolutely necessary to redress the losses and preserve the rights of the clergy. I also call on the clergy of the north of Ireland, to unite with those of the south, in praying parliament to admit of no commutation; if this step is judged useless to the public, and inconsistent with the interest of the whole order. If there were no danger attending themselves, the clergy in the north would not surely desert the support of their distressed brethren. But this is certainly not the case, it is easy to foresee, that if the white-boys in the south are successful in their violent and lawless endeavours to destroy the property of the clergy, and thus free themselves from the  
grievance

grievance of paying them, the example will be too inviting not to be followed by the peasantry in the north, however peaceable they may be at present.

The author believes he will be easily excused for adding the following passage out of the celebrated Bishop Berkley's *Minute Philosopher*, as it seems very applicable to the present times, and the book is somewhat scarce. The speakers are *Lyficles* and *Alciphron*, minute philosophers or free-thinkers, [*i. e.* gentlemen white-boys] together with *Crito* and *Euphranor*, Christians.

*Lyf.*—This is certainly good policy, that we should be frugal of our money, and reserve it for better uses, than to expend on the church and religion.

*Cri.* Surely the old apologue of the belly and members need not be repeated to such knowing men. It should seem as needless to observe, that all other states, which ever made any figure in the world for wisdom and politeness, have thought learning deserved encouragement as well as the sword; that grants for religious uses were as fitting as for knights service; and foundations for propagating piety, as necessary to the public welfare and defence, as either civil or military establishments. But I ask who are at this expence, and what is this expence so much complained of?

*Lyf.* As if you had never heard of church lands and tithes.

*Cri.* But I would fain know how they can be charged as an expence, either upon the nation or private men. Where nothing is exported the nation loseth nothing: and it is all one to the public, whether money circulates at home through the hands of a vicar or a squire. Then as for private men, who, for want of thought, are full of complaint



plaint about the payment of tithes, can any man justly complain of it as a tax, that he pays what never belonged to him? The tenantry rents his farm with this condition, and pays his landlord proportionably less than if his farm had been exempt from it: so he loseth nothing; it being all one to him whether he pays his pastor or his landlord. The landlord cannot complain that he has not what he hath no right to, either by grant, purchase, or inheritance. This is the case of tithes; and as for the church lands, he surely can be no free-thinker, nor any thinker at all, who doth not see that no man whether noble, gentle, or plebeian, hath any sort of right or claim to them, which he may not with equal justice pretend to all the lands in the kingdom.

*Lyf.* At present indeed we have no right, and that is our complaint.

*Cri.* You would have then what you have no right to:

*Lyf.* Not so neither: what we would have is first a right conveyed by law, and in the next place, the lands by virtue of such right.

*Cri.* In order to this, it might be expedient in the first place, to get an act passed for excommunicating from all civil rights every man that is a Christian, a scholar, and wears a black coat, as guilty of three capital offences against the public weal of the realm.

*Lyf.* To deal frankly, I think it would be an excellent good act. It would provide at once for several deserving men, rare artificers in wit and argument and ridicule, who have, too many of them, but small fortunes with a great arrear of merit towards their country, which they have so long enlightened and adorned *gratis*.

*Euph.*

*Eupb.* Pray tell me, *Lyficles*, are not the clergy legally possessed of their lands and emoluments?

*Lys.* No body denies it.

*Eupb.* Have they not been possessed of them from time immemorial?

*Lys.* This too I grant.

*Eupb.* They claim them by law and ancient prescription.

*Lys.* They do.

*Eupb.* Have the oldest families of the nobility a better title?

*Lys.* I believe not. It grieves me to see so many overgrown estates in the hands of ancient families, on account of no other merit, but what they brought with them into the world.

*Eupb.* May you not then as well take their lands too, and bestow them on the minute philosophers, as persons of more merit?

*Lys.* So much the better. This enlarges our view, and opens a new scene: It is very delightful in the contemplation of truth, to behold how one theory grows out of another.

*Alc.* Old *Pætus* used to say, that if the clergy were deprived of their hire, we should lose the most popular argument against them.

*Lys.* But so long as men live by religion, there will never be wanting teachers and writers in defence of it.

*Cri.* And how can you be sure they would be wanting though they did not live by it; since it is well known Christianity had its defenders even when men died by it?

*Lys.* One thing I know, there is a rare nursery of young plants growing up, who have been carefully guarded against every air of prejudice, and sprinkled with the dew of our choicest principles; meanwhile, wishes are wearisome, and to our infinite regret

regret nothing can be done so long as there remains any prejudice in favour of old customs and laws, and national constitutions, which, at bottom, we very well know and can demonstrate to be only words and notions.